

**Remarks  
Ambassador Lewis A. Lukens**

**U.S. Olympic Committee Handover Ceremony  
Olympafrica Offices, Dakar  
October 25, 2013**

***(As prepared)***

Dear representatives of the Ministry of Sports,  
Dear Mr. Executive Director of Olympafrica,  
Dear representatives of the Senegalese National Olympic Committee,  
Dear representatives of the World Anti-Doping Agency,  
Dear members of the Olympafrica family,  
Dear members of the Press,

Thank you all for being here today. It is my pleasure to celebrate with all of you this generous donation of shoes, clothing, and equipment of the United States Olympic Committee.

I admit that I only recently learned about Olympafrica, but already I am a real fan. And I am so happy to be here -- as not only a diplomat, but as a sports enthusiast. Our countries have a common love of sports, and the U.S. Embassy has conducted several sports diplomacy programs in recent years. We support bringing U.S. teams to Senegal -- including the basketball team from my alma mater Princeton. We have sent Senegalese girl basketball players to the United States on an exchange program. We hosted the "Ladies Turn" girls' soccer tournament in Dakar. And, we even brought Olympic medalist and WNBA and NBA players here to Senegal for clinics and games.

There is a natural connection between youth and sports, a connection that can also be used to initiate dialogue, and encourage intercultural understanding and socioeconomic development. It is important to listen to young people and to engage with them. Sports is also an excellent way of reinforcing communication between the generations and social integration. It is a natural platform for helping young people to develop life skills and to participate in community projects. In short, for many young people all over the world, sports is a way of learning how to live.

Speaking of youth, please permit me to end by mentioning one of the most important results of President Obama's recent visit in June: the expansion of the Young African Leaders Initiative, or "YALI". YALI rolled out in 2010, but will be expanded in 2014 in order to allow 500 Africans to study in an intensive program in the United States for six weeks. These young people will take part in a summit in Washington D.C., and -- for those who will be selected -- will take part in internships. We are looking for leaders between 25 and 35 in public administration, business, and also civil society who have a solid command of English. The competition will open in the first week of December. I encourage all of you to think of young people around you who might be eligible for this program. We have brought brochures and encourage you to take one home with you. And I also hope that you will speak with all of the outstanding young people around you!

Thank you to Mr. Diack for hosting us and for giving us this occasion. I'm really glad to have this occasion to meet all of you and celebrate our common love of sport!